

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 RSC-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-05 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 /052 W

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R 011630Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6112

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 7907

E.O. 11562: GDS

TAGS HPINT, GR

SUBJECT: ELECTION ESTIMATES

1. AS ELECTION CAMPAIGN ACCELERATES, RELUCTANCE TO FORECAST RESULTS BECOMES MORE AMRKED EXCEPT AMONG THOSE IN CARETAKE GOVERNEMTN AND STAUNCH CARAMANLIS SUPPORTERS WHO ANTICIPATE SUBSTANTIAL VICTORY. THIS IS CASE BOTH AMONG PARTY STALWARTS AND KNOWLEDGEABLE POLITICAL COMMENTATORS. SUCH INDIVIDUALS ASSERT THAT IT WOULD BE UNREALISTIC TO HAZARD ANY REASONABLY HARD PERCENTAGE ESTIMATES UNTIL FINAL STAGE OF SO FAR GENERALIZED CAMPAIGNING. BY THEN, ARGUMENT RUNS, INFIGHTING AMONG PERTIES WILL IDENTIFY AND SHARPEN SPECIFIC ISSUES SO THAT PRESS AND PUBLIC REACTIONS CAN BECOME MORE DIRECTLY FOCUSED. CRYSTAL BALL-GAZING IS FURTHER INHIBITED BY UNCERTAINTY CONCERNING OUTCOME OF CYPRUS SITUATION AND IMPACT ANY NEW DEVELOPMENTS PRIOR TO ELECTIONS MAY HAVE UPON ELECTORAGE. EXCEPT FOR CAMPAIGNING OF UNITED LEFT, PAPANDREOU'S PASOK AND TO LIMITED EXTENT GAROUFALIAS, ALL THREE OF WHICH ARE STILL ONLY IN TAKE-OFF STAGE, TWO MAJOR ADVERSARY PARTIES, CU/NF AND NEW DEMOCRACY, HAVE SPOKEN ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY IN GENERALITIES AND DESCRIBED SUCH BROAD OBJECTIVES AS TO OBFUSCATE INTELLIGENT CHOUCES BY GREEK ELECTORATE.

2. NO ONE HAS SO FAR EVEN TRIED TO MAKE ANY ASSESSMENT BASED ON PERSONAL APPEAL OF INDIVIDUAL CANDIDAATES WITHIN

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RESPECTIVE CONSTITUENCIES. MOREOVER, FACT THAT NO

ELECTIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE FOR MORE THAN TEN YEARS
INHIBITS POSSIBILITY OF MAKING PROJECTIONS BASED ON
PAST EXPERIENCE. ANY COMPREHENSIVE EFFORT NECESSARY TO
SORT OUT IMPACT OF CANDIDATES AND TO MAKE NECESSARY
COMPARISONS OF STRENGTH OF INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES WOULD
BE PREMATURE. FORMER TENDENCY OF GREEK ELECTORATE TO
PERSONALIZE CAMPAIGN SEEMS AGAIN TO BE PROMINENT FEATURE,
BUT AFGER SEVEN LEAN YEARS UNDER JUNTA WHEN THERE WAS NO
OPPORTUNITY FOR FORMER DEPUTIES TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR
CAPACITY FOR PRODUCING RESULTS FOR LOCAL CONSTITUENTS,
EXTENT TO WHICH NEW FACES WILL ATTRACT SUPPORT IS ANOTHER
UNKNOWN QUANTITY. ADDITIONALL COMPLICATION IN THIS REGARD
IS THAT SOME PROMINENT EX-DEPUTIES, BY REASON OF THEIR
HAVING BEEN DRAWN INTO CONVERSATIONS WITH JUNTA LEADERS,
WERE EXCLUDED FROM PARTY SLATES BUT ARE RUNNING AS
INDEPENDENTS IN AREAS WHERE THEY HAD PREVIOUSLY ENJOYED
GREAT STRENGTH AND WHERE IN PAST SOME HAVE EMERGED WITH
HIGHEST NUMBER OF VOTES. IN OUR VIEW, CHOICE BETWEEN
SLATES OF CU/NF AND NEW DEMOCRACY IS VERY MUCH A HOBSON'S
CHOICE, WHILE FORCES OF UNITED LEFT AND PAPANDREOU ARE
SO CLOSE TOGETHR ON ISSUES SUCH AS GREECE'S RELATION-
SHIP TO NATO AND TO EEC THAT AGAIN VOTERS SEEM MORE
LIKELY TO MAKE THEIR ULTIMATE DECISION IN TERMS OF
SUCCESS OF INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES IN PUTTING THEMSELVES
ACROSS.

3. SO FAR ONE PROSPECTIVELY CRITICAL ISSUE, CYPRUS, AS
ALREADY REPORTED, HAS BEEN PLAYED IN LOW KEY BY LEADERS
OF TWO MAJOR PARTIES, CARAMANLIS AND MAVROS, BUT IT IS
QUITE POSSIBLE THAT AS CAMPAIGN HEATS UP, DEGREE TO WHICH
THEY HAVE SO FAR SUCCEEDED IN MUTING DOMESTIC ASPECTS
OF DELICATE CYPRUS SITATION IN INTEREST OF NOT IMPENDING
DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS AMONG ALL ELEMENTS CONCERNED,
INCLUDING THOSE OUTISE GREECE, MAY BE REDUCED. CHANGES
IN CYPRUS SITUATION COULD MAKE THIS ELECTION ISSUE AND
CONFRONT VOTERS WITH MORE OF A CHOICE.

4. BECAUSE OF ANTICIPATED EVENTUAL REFERENDUM QUESTION
OF FUTURE FORM OF GFREEK STATE--MONARCHY OR REPUBLIC--IS
NOT A REAL ELECTION ISSUE, ALTHOUGH BOTH PASOK AND
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CU/NF HAVE SEEN FIT TO ANNOUNCE OPPOSITION TO
RESTORATION OF MONARCHY. NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY SKIRTS
ISSUE ALTOGETHER BY STATEMENT THAT ELECTORATE WILL
HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE ITS INDEPENDENT CHOICE IRRESPECTIVE
OF PARTY.

6. IN REVIOUS MESSAGE EMBASSY RECORDED ITS VIEWS
RESPECTING UNLIKELYHOOD OF FURTHER COUP EFFORT BUT

WOULD NEVERTHELESS REMIND DEPARTMENT THAT PRUDENCE REQUIRES AT LEAST KEEPING THIS POSSIBILITY IN MIND, HOWEVER REMOTE IT MAY BE. IN EVALUATING COUP RISK ONE GOOD MEASURE IS PROBABLY EXTENT TO WHICH CARETAKE GOVERNMENT IS ABLE TO MAINTAIN CURRENT LAW AND ORDER ENVIRONMENT. SHOULD STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS REACH PROPORTION REQUIRING STRONG POLICE OR EVEN MILITARY ACTION, THIS COULD AFFECT ELECTORATE'S ATTITUDES. ALONG SIMILAR LINES, BECAUSE CURRENT CARETAKE GOVERNMENT IS OBVIOUSLY IN NO POSITION TO DEAL DECISIVELY WITH PRESSING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, ANOTHER UNSETTLING PROSPECT COULD BE GROWING RESTIVENESS IN GREEK LABOR MOVEMENT AND CRIPPLING STRIKES. POSSIBILITY OF DELIBERATE PROVOCATION FROM EXTRXE LEFT RESULTING IN ACTS OF VIOLENCE DESIGNED TO CONFRONT GOVERNMENT WITH POTENTIALLY DAMAGING OPTIONS CAN ALSO NOT BE EXCLUDED. GIVEN SHORT TIME SPAN BETWEEN NOW AND NOVEMBER 17, HOWEVER, EMBSSY CONTINUES TO BELIEVE CHANCES REMAIN GOOD THAT PRESENT REGIME WILL FIND STIP-GAP OR AD HOC METHODS OF DEALING WITH THIS CATEGORY OF CONTINGENCY TO PREVENT THEM FROM ASSUMING SUCH CRITICAL PROPORTIONS AS TO ENCOURAGE RIGHTIST ELEMENTS THAT MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO MOUNT COUP IF THEY ESTIMATED POLITICAL CLIMATE RIPE FOR SUCH EFFORT. IN ANY EVENT, AS EMBASSY PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, INABILITY TO GOVERN EFFECTIVELY MORE THAN AMPLY ILLUSTRATED BY MILITARY REGIME AFTER NOVEMBER 25 COUP SHOULD GIVE PAUSE TO ANY THOUGHT WITHIN ARMY OF TRYING THROUGH COUP TO RESTORE SIMILAR TYPE OF REGIME.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL PARTIES, ELECTION FORECASTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: smithrj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ATHENS07907
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DG ALTERED
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740314-0548
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741180/aaaacqgk.tel
Line Count: 142
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: smithrj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 MAY 2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <12 MAR 2003 by smithrj>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ELECTION ESTIMATES
TAGS: PINT, GR, (CARAMANLIS), (GAROUFALIAS), (PAPANDREOU)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005